

EX AWATERIAN SERVICE

This is a service we hold in Blenheim where many of the people of our district retire to. It gives an opportunity for people to gather have a small service and then share lunch and enjoy catching up with each other.

WELCOME

On behalf of the St Ninian's Church and the Awatere Christian Joint Venture welcome to this service and luncheon as we celebrate our links and friendship with the Awatere and Flaxbourne area.

PRAYER

Lord we gather this morning in the unity of your spirit and comradeship and friendship that has its roots in the Awatere and Flaxbourne. Bless us as we worship you and spend time fellowshiping together. In Jesus Name Amen

HYMN Praise to the Lord the almighty #22

BIBLE READING

It has been a whole year since our last ex Awaterian service and it is good to be together again. Many things have been happened in the last 12 months. Some good and some not so good

With some sadness we note that there are those who were with us last year that are absent today. As we remember them we thank God for all they meant to us and the richness they brought into our lives.

We thank God also for the large turn out of friends here today

The Ex Awaterian services are for those who have a very fond place in their hearts for the Awatere and Flaxbourne . They are a time in which we come together to hear what is happening in the area and catch up and renew our friendships..

By and large the greatest impact on the district in the last 18 months has been the drought. When we meet last we were poised on the brink of drought wondering how bad it would get. The winter had been unusually dry and the Spring had come and gone very fast.

We watched and waited as the hills went from green to brown then to a shade of silvery white. We saw many Truck units of stock go out of the district and dams dry up. We wondered if this was going to be as bad as the big one of 1958 which many of you battled through.

As a people of faith the church watched, prayed and sought to support those in the district. Among the many things we did was holding a dance and organising a drought service in a paddock. The support we received from you and others in town for this service was tremendous. It meant a lot to us to know that people cared. During the service naturally we prayed for rain and wisdom of how to farm through the drought. We took from the service a small dead pine tree, some mud from a dam and some chewed tussock to put into the church until the drought broke. Little did we know then that many a visitor was to wonder over the coming months why we had not got ridden of the Christmas tree yet.

A day after the service the black clouds rolled in and as I was working in the garden I prayed to God saying yes Lord make it rain then it will prove to everyone that you are the living God. Well it did rain but as I stood there getting wet I realised God does not have to prove anything because God is God.

As the drought got worse the Army arrived with their water tankers and the media came to town.

We watched and waited eyeing the crucial dates on the calendar and thinking it will be okay as long as we get rain before the middle of march or even the end of march. Those dates came and went and our feet became heavier because the soil temperatures where plummeting. It seemed as if the district was destined for another year of drought.

What had happened to our prayers? Had he not heard us call out in our frustration?

Yes God had given us wisdom to farm well. You only had to look around the district to see the condition of the remaining stock to see this.

But where was the rain that we prayed for?

Well it came in the first weeks of July..The paddock were we had stood for the drought service was in some places 5 foot under water. The water soaked into the parched ground. But was it to late?

No the temperatures remained mild through the winter and the grass continued to grow. So much so some farmers even had the problem of Lambs struggling in the long grass.

Since then the rain has continued to fall and if you were to drive through the Awatere today it could not look better. It is green and many a paddock is being cut for hay.

But even though the physical drought has ended we are now caught in financial drought. Brought about by the low stock numbers left and the financial strain of farming through the drought.

The drought was made easier for us because of the lessons and the work carried out by past generations like the water schemes that carried water to where it was most needed.

It was made easier by the support we received from out side the district, such as the army water tankers, the many cards, letters and the like and by those who came and stood in our soil on the paddock during the drought service.

It was tempting to think that God had forgotten us in our plight as the rain did not come in the amount that we wanted. That God does not answer prayer!

But in his timing God does answer prayer. The rain came when we had given up hope, we thought it was to late for there to be any good grass growth,

Yet when the drought broke in the middle of winter the grass grew so much that the district now looks great.

If we cry out to God he does answer our prayers, his ways and his timing are beyond human wisdom.

As we face the droughts in our lives like the financial one the farmers face in the Awatere or your own personal droughts whether it is a health issue, a family matter or some other thing, let us remember God is sovereign and can do all things, if we pray to God he will hear us and act.

It won't always be in the way we envisage but it will be in a way that only the all seeing, all knowing and all powerful God knows is right.

PRAYER

Living God we want to acknowledge and say thank- you for all that you have done for the district that is close to our hearts during this period of drought. We thank-you for the way that you have answered our prayers for rain, for the way that the grass continued to grow through the winter and the way the district looks so good now.

We continue to bring the people of the Awatere and Flaxbourne area to you in prayer asking that you help them through the financial drought they suffer from now.

We also think of our own personal droughts, Those trails that we are facing at the moment and ask that you break into these situations and bring a gentle rain to revive the parched soil of our lives.

We ask this in the confidence of seeing you act in our past and in the name of your son our saviour Jesus Christ Amen.

HYMN God is working purpose out

Martin Prayer for the collection

Lets pray

We bring our gifts to you, Lord God With cheerfulness and a joyful heart. Grant that these gifts may strengthen and enable ministry in the Awatere / Flaxbourne area. We give you thanks for the ministry that we have received. Amen

PRAYER

HYMN Now thank we all our God

BENEDICTION

May the blessing of God almighty, father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you, and all whom you love this day and ever more. Amen

Please join us in the hall for Lunch.